They love to dwell on an existing God, but they do not love the contemplation of the actually existing God. Driven by these opposing impulses—now by the one, and now by the other—the religious history of the world is a very vacillating, as well as a very melancholy one. Man is ever fondly clinging to the idea of a God; and ever endeavouring, at the same time, to bring that idea into accordance with his own wishes, his narrow interests and character. The religious history of mankind may be summed up in this—that it is a continually repeated attempt to adapt the character of God to those who feel that they cannot do without him.

It is worthy of being inquired, whether this strong tendency of our nature may not, be at work in this present age, as it has been operating in all past ages; and whether our literary and scientific men are not holding forth to themselves and to the popular view the Divine Being shorn of some of the brightest of his perfections, because too dazzling to their eyes; whether the God adored by some be not as different from the truly existing God as the gods of the heathens were: be not, in short, the creature of men's imagination, just as truly as the images worshipped in idolatrous nations are the workmanship of men's hands.

Taking a wider range than the writers on natural theology are wont to do, and embracing within our view a larger field, we hope to rise, by means of the very works of God, to a grander and more elevated conception of the Divine character than those have attained who look to mere physical facts and laws. The inquiry will present numberless proofs of universal wisdom and benevolence. When we enter this council-chamber of the Lord of the universe, we shall find clearer evidence of a distinct affection of love reigning in his bosom, than can possibly be

discovered from the adaptations of inanimate nature, and of the functions and limbs of auimaln which constitute, as it were, the mere outworks of nature. We shall rise beyond law to life, and beyond life to love. Mounting still higher, we shall pass beyond even love, and reach a moral principle, or rather a moral purpose and affection. In judging of human character we distinguish between the man of mere tenderness of nerve and sensibility, and the man of virtue; and in studying the Divine government, we shall have occasion to shew that God is dint-in-